

Greg Derr photo

Deputy Fire Chief William Harriman and volunteer Duxbury firefighter Jack Sjustedt tear into the smoldering timbers of the Powder Point Bridge during a fire this morning that will put the wooden bridge out of commission for much of the summer.

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Duxbury bridge burns

Powder Point span to be closed much of summer

By Ted Koval and Jim Schuh
The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY — Powder Point Bridge, reputedly the nation's longest wooden bridge, was cut in half by fire this morning.

Fire damaged about 70 feet of the half-mile-long wooden structure that is the main link between the town beach and Duxbury.

"It will have to be closed for a good part of the summer," town highway supervisor Gil Burns said.

The bridge spans the Back River, separating the Powder Point section of Duxbury from a miles-long barrier beach that extends south from the mainland at Marshfield.

Until the bridge is fixed, Duxbury residents will have to drive through Marshfield to get to the

residents-only parking lot at Duxbury Beach.

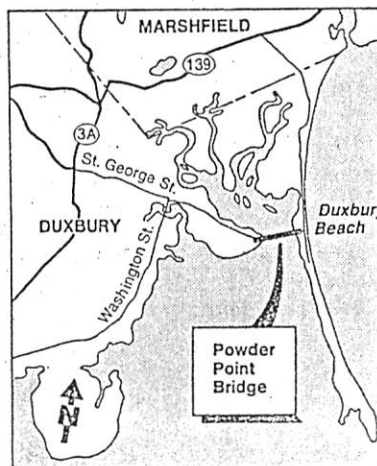
"The traffic will be pretty bad here until people find out it's closed," Duxbury policeman Bill Burgoyne said. "This is a bad time of the year."

Firefighters were hampered because the blaze broke out in the middle of the bridge. "You don't see any fire hydrants on a bridge," Burns said.

Firefighters were unable to drive fire trucks onto the bridge because of their weight. Two forestry trucks, which weigh less, were brought to the scene and were able to go out onto the bridge.

Because the tide was high, firefighters were able to get two boats with pumps close to the bridge. They doused the flames from underneath the bridge. "If there was just mud here and low tide, it would make

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POWDER POINT BRIDGE



Greg Derr photo

Duxbury firefighter Dennis Symmonds climbs from beneath burning deck of Powder Point Bridge today.

Powder Point Bridge fire cuts Duxbury span in half

BRIDGE

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things a lot tougher," said Fire Chief Carl O'Neil.

"This bridge is unique but it hasn't burned down yet," O'Neil said. "This is one of the largest fires we've had here."

"The people have put a lot of money into this bridge so there's a lot of feeling in it," O'Neil said. "The good part about this is that it can be replaced."

Susan Howland of Brockton went to the bridge to fish this morning, as hundreds of anglers have done for decades. But Howland found her fishing spot ablaze.

"We could see chunks of railing falling off into the water," she said. "We first thought it was a car on fire that's how big it was and how high the flames were."

O'Neil was unsure of the cost of replacing the burned timbers. "A lot of undamaged stuff will have to be pulled out to get to what needs to be replaced," he said.

Fire officials said they didn't know what sparked the fire. "It takes a lot to get these timbers going," said Deputy Fire Chief William Harriman. "It could have been a cigarette festering since yesterday."

"I'd guess the fire was going for a while," O'Neil said. "I couldn't smell any fuel so I wouldn't call it suspicious. It may have been a smoke material that caused the fire. If it gets into the rotted piece of wood, it can really get going."

Duxbury police said they were notified of the fire at 4:14 this morning by a telephone operator who said she received a call that the bridge was ablaze.

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